

# Town of Haddam

Office of the First Selectman



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**IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 70**, *An Act Concerning The Preservation Of Lands Under The Control Of The Department Of Energy And Environmental Protection And The Department Of Agriculture.*

Environment Committee Public Hearing

February 19, 2014

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of H.B. 70**, An Act Concerning the Preservation of Lands Under the Control of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture.

As a Haddam resident, Executive Director of Citizens for Protection of Public Lands and now First Selectman of Haddam this bill is crucial to help ensure our state parks, forests, wildlife management areas and other public open space will remain dedicated to conservation and recreation purposes for all to enjoy in their protected state into the indefinite future.

Currently, State-owned lands, especially those in the Recreational and Natural Heritage Trust Program, have no legal protection to prevent conveyance to another owner or for another use, including private development.

I am also highly in favor of a Constitutional amendment to include a provision that would ensure our conservation land and other natural resources in custody of the state shall not be taken or disposed of except by law enacted by the legislature with a supermajority of both chambers. I also support the recommendations of the Council on Environmental Quality in its special report *"Preserved But Maybe Not: The Impermanence of State Conservation Lands."*

Through my firsthand experiences over the last four years strongly opposing the "Haddam Land Swap," I have witnessed the public needs to have confidence that state open space and conservation lands are preserved forever and will not be developed or "swapped" in a manner inconsistent with the important public purposes for which they were acquired whether by the generosity of citizens or the foresight of the legislature.

In closing, with full transparency, increased oversight and advanced legal protection, we will assure that our important open space, wildlife management areas, marshes, waterways, forests, parks and all conservation lands will be preserved and protected for generations to come.

I strongly urge you to pass this important bill, thank you for your consideration.

**Melissa Schlag**

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